



Chapter 6

THE CARTOON CONTROVERSY

Creating Muslims in a Danish Setting

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“Islam is peace! Islam is peace!” The slogan is being shouted tentatively in Danish and lingers above our heads before it disappears into the cold air of the main square of Copenhagen. I am in the midst of the biggest Muslim demonstration in the history of Denmark (Hansen and Hundevadt 2006: 40). Three thousand Muslims have gathered to protest against the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad that appeared in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*. However, rather than simply protesting, the demonstration is striving to create an alternative representation of Islam. Islam does not equal terrorism, as one of the cartoons suggested. Rather, Islam is peace.

Based on fieldwork among Palestinians living in Denmark,¹ this article presents a situational analysis of the above demonstration (cf. Gluckman [1940] 1958). I argue that the event of the cartoons, coupled with the demonstration, was a major creative situation. Not only was it instrumental in transforming the discourse on immigrants in Denmark,² it also created a political platform

from which Muslims could unite and form a strong opposition. In this sense, the cartoon controversy mirrors 9/11. Whereas the attack on the Twin Towers, a symbol of capitalism and the Western world, created a political platform on which Western nations could unite and initiate the 'global war on terror', the insulting of the Prophet, the main symbol of Islam, created a platform that Muslim communities could use to counter Western hegemonies.³

Following Max Gluckman's ([1940] 1958) *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand*, the present chapter is organized in three parts. The first describes the actual demonstration. The second traces the national Danish discourse on Muslims and situates the cartoon controversy within a historical context. The third offers an analysis of the event. I suggest that, in order to understand the connections between phenomena of widely different scales, we need to move beyond the empirical concepts of 'local' and 'global' and study the structures that cross-cut these scales, thus making such distinctions analytically redundant.

The Event: The Demonstration

The last week of September 2005 turned out to be a bad week for the Palestinians of my acquaintance in Denmark. On Monday, Brian Mikkelsen, the Conservative minister of culture, launched the Canon of Culture⁴ as part of the 'battle of culture' (*kulturkamp*) against "immigrants from Muslim countries who refuse to recognize Danish culture and European norms."⁵ The rhetoric of war used by Mikkelsen prompted my Palestinian informants to rename the Canon of Culture as the 'Cannon' of Culture. On Thursday, the newspaper *Politiken* ran a story describing how a member of the Danish Parliament, Louise Frevert of the Danish People's Party,⁶ compared Muslims to a fast-spreading cancer.⁷ Finally, on Friday, *Jyllands-Posten* printed the 12 cartoons in an article entitled "The Face of Muhammad."⁸ Later that night, the cartoons were broadcast on the Arabic satellite television channel Al Jazeera.

In the following weeks, the cartoons were a hot topic among the Palestinians. Nobody had actually read *Jyllands-Posten*, but everybody knew about the cartoons, whether through Al Jazeera, the Friday prayer in the local mosques, or chains of text messages. After a week of intense debate among my informants, the rest of the Danish media picked up the story, and shortly thereafter a call went out for a demonstration on 14 October. The message was distributed via the mosques, flyers, and text messages. According to the Palestinians, the purpose of the demonstration was threefold: to protest against what they saw as the latest offense in a continuous onslaught of public outbursts against Muslims; to counter the possibility that somebody might do something stupid (implicitly referring to local Muslims taking up violent means); and, finally, to show that Muslims are peaceful. My informants told me that the imams at Friday prayers had requested that not everyone should attend the demonstration in order to avoid making it too large. One participant in the demonstration explained: "The mosques are able to gather 10,000

people, but we are only 3,000 today.” As far as I could see, the only non-Muslim ethnic Danes who participated were journalists and myself.

The demonstration began at Nørrebro Station (close to the largest mosque in Copenhagen) and continued to Rådhuspladsen, the town hall square in Copenhagen. The first two-thirds of the demonstrators consisted of men, the last third of woman and children. I spotted reporters from two Danish television channels, as well as one Swedish and two Arabic—Al Jazeera and Al Arabia. The demonstration had been registered and was escorted by the Danish police. Additionally, Muslim security guards, wearing bright yellow shirts, had been appointed to ensure that everything was in order, keeping demonstrators to one side of the road and allowing traffic to flow in the opposite direction. They also made the demonstrators stop for every red traffic light, which kept the pace rather slow. Alongside the procession, a group of people were handing out flyers in Arabic and Danish, explaining to passers-by why they were demonstrating. In keeping with this bilingual policy, all banners and signs were printed in Arabic as well as in Danish, displaying statements such as “No to the clash of civilizations, yes to the dialogue of civilizations” and “No to racism and fanaticism, yes to peace and co-existence.” Along the entire route, participants were shouting the Islamic creed, “Allah la ilaha Muhammad rasulu llah” (There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger), and “Allahu Akbar” (God is great).¹

When we finally arrived at Rådhuspladsen, an imam from a local mosque gave a speech in Arabic that was translated into Danish by a Danish convert. People were encouraged to shout the slogan “Islam is peace” in both Arabic and Danish, while spontaneous outbursts of “Allahu Akbar,” praising the Lord in Arabic, were downplayed. The organizers also tried to make the crowd shout “No to terror” in Danish, but without much success. The demonstration ended with a request to participate in a common prayer at the square, but only a few hundred did so, nearly all men. Afterward, I asked some of them why they had prayed, and they explained that praying is the most peaceful act one can undertake. However, some of the young Palestinians took a more critical stance. Growing up in Denmark, they had developed a double perspective (cf. Said 1994: 44), and during the demonstration they had been anticipating how indigenous Danes might perceive it. They were embarrassed by the form that the demonstration had taken, complaining that the participants had shouted in Arabic. They also distanced themselves from the common prayer, which Khadije, a young Palestinian girl, said made them appear medieval. However, the young Palestinians were pleased that the demonstration had managed to gather together so many people from different Muslim congregations and different ethnic groups.

Situating the Two Parties

Whereas Gluckman ([1940] 1958) used the opening of a bridge in Zululand to analyze the relations between a colonial white minority and a subordinated black majority, I will use the above demonstration in Copenhagen to explore a

relationship that is in some ways the reverse—namely, the relations between a majority of native Danes and a minority of immigrants who have settled in Denmark. The event of the cartoons and the demonstration that followed had the effect of manifesting and constructing a set of oppositions between ethnic Danes and immigrants that are guiding the policies and social processes of settlement. Below I will briefly introduce the two positions.

On the one hand, *Jyllands-Posten* advocated freedom of speech as an absolute value that does not submit to religious feelings. This position was connected to the battle of culture that the Danish right-wing government at first launched against what it termed ‘judges of taste’ (*smagsdommere*), consisting of ‘culture radicals’ (*kulturradikale*)⁹ and ‘experts’. However, just five days before the printing of the cartoons, Mikkelsen declared that this battle had now been won. Instead, he opened a new frontier, aiming the Canon of Culture at immigrants from Muslim countries.

On the other hand, the Palestinians challenged this discourse by introducing an alternative interpretation of the cartoon controversy as discrimination against a minority group. All of the Palestinians whom I talked to perceived the cartoons as the last blow in a range of discriminatory measures taken against them. At the demonstration and in daily conversations, they were addressing not so much *Jyllands-Posten* as the Danish government and Danish society as a whole. However, many Palestinians also focused simultaneously on the insult to the Prophet Muhammad himself. According to this religious discourse, the Prophet is holy, and thus *Jyllands-Posten* had crossed a red line.

The two parties were situated in different times, places, and spaces. First, there were different understandings about the timing of the appearance of the cartoons. In the Muslims’ view, the fact that the offensive cartoons were printed in the month of Ramadan was perceived as an additional provocation on the part of *Jyllands-Posten*. Flemming Rose, the newspaper’s editor of culture, stated that he was not aware that it was Ramadan. Rather, he explained that the timing was related to several recent cases of censorship in relation to Islam. Secondly, the two parties were situated in different places. While *Jyllands-Posten* obviously communicated through its own features and reportage, the Muslims communicated through mosques, text messages, flyers, and Al Jazeera. Furthermore, ending up at the town hall square, the demonstrators assumed that they were standing in front of the *Jyllands-Posten* office building because of a huge neon billboard nearby advertising the newspaper. In reality, they were demonstrating in front of the competing daily newspaper, *Politiken*, which happens to have its offices there. Finally, the two parties were anchored within different spaces of interpretation or discourse. In order to communicate a message of peace, some Muslim participants chose to end the demonstration with a common prayer in the public square. However, partly as a result of the praying, the demonstration itself was interpreted by pedestrians passing by—and by the Danish media in general—as a demonstration *for* Islam and *against* the secular freedom of speech. Furthermore, the slogan “Islam er fred” (Islam is peace) unfortunately sounds in Danish like “Islam er vred” (Islam is angry), and, as a result, pedestrians asked some of my informants if they were about to go to war.

Tracing the Danish Discourse on Muslims

The majority of Palestinians in Denmark arrived from Lebanon in the late 1980s. While waiting to obtain asylum, they were placed in centers run by the Danish Red Cross. These centers were often situated in the countryside, where the refugees were welcomed and sometimes encouraged to host evenings in the local village halls at which they could display their culture through food, music, and small exhibitions. In interviews, my informants would highlight these events, as they had not been accustomed to anybody taking an interest in their culture. Within the refugee camps in Lebanon, Palestinian flags and other symbols had been displayed, but outside the camps people would downplay their origins. I was told that during the Lebanese civil war, Palestinians ran the risk of being shot at the roadblocks if they did not manage to hide their dialect. Hence, the young men who had just laid down their Kalashnikovs and left the war in Lebanon suddenly found themselves in the Danish countryside dancing *dabke* (the traditional Palestinian folk dance) and drawing pictures with Palestinian symbols. In other words, in the late 1980s, when the Palestinians arrived, they were perceived as a group of people defined by their ethnic origin. The first question Palestinians were asked by local Danes was, “Where are you from?” And since the Palestinians did not identify themselves as Lebanese (and were not identified by the Lebanese government as such), they would answer, “Palestine.” One could say that it was the logic of the “national order of things” (Malkki 1995) that ruled at the time.

Jonathan Schwartz has traced the discourse on immigrants in Denmark. He mentions how immigrants in the late 1960s and 1970s were referred to as ‘guest workers’, a euphemism for the cheap labor force that Denmark was importing at the time (Schwartz 1985: 5). Expected to return ‘home’ after a few years, guest workers were perceived as a temporary phenomenon, and in the studies conducted at the time they were portrayed as more or less grateful *homo economicus* (Schwartz 1990: 47). In the late 1970s and 1980s, the guest workers were recategorized as ‘immigrants’ or ‘ethnic minorities’, and the people in question became objects of integration policies and studies (*ibid.*; see also Mørck 1998: 36). The focus in the discourse on immigrants underwent a change from the economic aspects to culture and cultural differences. Culture was viewed as a problem—an obstacle to be overcome through integration (Schwartz 1990: 47–49).¹⁰ As reflected in the discussion on refugee centers above, Palestinian culture was also celebrated as exotic folklore. According to Yvonne Mørck (1998: 36–37), this representation continued during the 1990s. However, as part of the focus on cultural differences, the Muslim background of immigrants had already been specifically highlighted in the 1980s (*ibid.*). At some point during the 1990s, the immigrants were once more reconceptualized in the Danish public discourse, this time as ‘Muslims’ (Hervik 2002).¹¹

My fieldwork confirms this development. In public places in Denmark, at schools and workplaces, or simply on the streets, Palestinians are no longer approached as immigrants and asked where they are from; rather, people assume, based on skin color, name, or dialect, that they are Muslims. Today, they

are asked questions such as “What is Ramadan all about?” or “How come you don’t wear a headscarf?” Whereas Schwartz (1985) identifies the metaphors ‘guest’ and ‘host’ as structuring the relationship between native Danes and guest workers, I detect a present-day ‘enlightenment project’ in the Danish public discourse on Muslims. If the discourse on guest workers focuses on the economy and that on immigrants focuses on culture, the discourse on Muslims focuses on mindsets. Culture is no longer conceived as the primary obstacle to integration; instead, that obstacle is now considered to be how Muslims *think*. While the discourse on culture originally highlighted traditions, that is, how the immigrants dressed or danced, the discourse on the ‘Muslim mindset’ indicates a belief that the immigrants’ outward behavior reveals a specific set of values or ideology.¹²

This discourse can be detected in the Canon of Culture launched by Mikkelsen, as well as in the cartoons of the Prophet in *Jyllands-Posten* and in several recent public debates in Denmark on the topics of headscarves and private Muslim elementary schools, among others. However, the rest of this chapter will focus on the Canon of Culture, the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, and the case of Layal, a young Palestinian woman. By choosing three very different examples of statements with different senders—the minister of culture, a private newspaper, and ordinary pedestrians in a suburb of Copenhagen—I hope to show that the printing of the cartoons was not an exceptional act committed by a right-wing newspaper. Rather, my contention is that the controversy brought out a general discourse on Muslims, one that is invoked in many different settings and at many different levels in Danish society.¹³

The Canon of Culture

One of the first initiatives of the newly elected right-wing government in 2001 was to start what it referred to as a ‘battle of culture’ or a ‘battle of values’.¹⁴ This campaign was originally directed at what were referred to as ‘judges of taste’. In his New Year’s speech in 2002, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen declared, “We believe that human beings are best choosing for themselves. We do not need experts and ‘judges of taste’ to decide on our behalf,” adding that the government would remove all superfluous councils and advisory boards.¹⁵ In December 2004, Mikkelsen launched the second phase of the battle of culture by introducing his idea of a national Canon of Culture. According to the minister, the purpose of the canon was to start a debate on “what it means to be Danish at a time when the nation-state is under pressure and globalization is encroaching.”¹⁶ In September 2005, just before the canon was made public, Mikkelsen elaborated on his vision at the annual national conference of the Conservative Party. As reported by the *Konservative Landsråd*, the minister announced that “the new frontier in the battle of culture” was “immigrants from Muslim countries who refuse to acknowledge Danish culture and European norms.” He asserted that “a medieval Muslim culture will never become as valid as the Danish culture that grew out of the old soil between Skagen and Gedser and between Dueodde and Blåvandshuk.”¹⁷ He also stated that Danes cannot accept that “in the midst of our country a parallel

society is developing in which minorities are practicing their medieval norms and undemocratic mindsets.” Finally, he proceeded to give examples, such as gender segregation at public Islamic meetings and the dilemma of an author who was writing a book on Islam and who had difficulties in finding an illustrator who would agree to draw the face of Muhammad. Summing up, Mikkelsen declared, “We have to defend democracy and freedom of speech,” and characterized “cultural armament” as “the best vaccine against undemocratic tendencies within the society.” He ended his speech by proclaiming, “We will fight for Western values like democracy, equality, and human rights.”¹⁸

What is most striking about the speech is that ‘immigrants’ have become synonymous with ‘Muslims’, who are again synonymous with ‘Islam’, and all three categories stand in an opposed and antagonistic relation to the old Danish culture that stems from the soil itself. It is also interesting that the word ‘old’ in relation to something Danish indicates ‘authenticity’, whereas ‘old’ in relation to immigrants or Muslims indicates ‘medieval’. Furthermore, given that it is a Danish minister who is speaking, it is interesting that the value of equality is directed only at Muslim gender relations, not at ethnic relations within Danish society.

Mikkelsen’s conference speech revealed a rather schematic perception of Danes and immigrants. Danes were characterized by Western values (democracy, gender equality, freedom of speech, human rights), while immigrants were characterized as being Muslim (medieval, equipped with an undemocratic mindset, and lacking freedom of speech and human rights). Although Mikkelsen situated immigrants in the Middle Ages, he also offered them a way out. If integration in the 1990s was the political instrument that would overcome cultural differences, Mikkelsen suggested a new ‘cure’ for treating undemocratic mindsets—the ‘vaccine’ of ‘cultural armament’. It would be a question of educating them, of offering them knowledge, or, as the minister framed it, “of making the immigrants and their descendants familiar with Danish society, its history, and its democratic principles.” Mikkelsen declared that the government had introduced free access to the National Museum and the Danish National Gallery, in addition to having created a national Canon of Culture “as a gift to all citizens in this country—including the immigrants.”¹⁹

The Face of Muhammad

Five days later, the most widely read Danish daily newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, printed an article entitled “The Face of Muhammad,”²⁰ thus setting off what Danish public opinion has referred to as the biggest national crisis since World War II (Rothstein and Rothstein 2006: 13; Trads 2006: 9). “The Face of Muhammad” consists of a short text and 12 cartoons. Just above the text is a subtitle reading “Freedom of Speech.” The article starts by summing up different examples of self-censorship in relation to Islam: the author whom Mikkelsen referred to in his speech is invoked again, as is the removal of a piece of artwork from a museum out of the “fear of Muslim reaction.” The text moves on to state that “modern secular society is rejected by some Muslims. They demand an exceptional position, insisting on special consideration for their own religious

feelings. This is incompatible with secular democracy and freedom of speech, where one has to put up with insults, mockery, and ridicule. It is certainly not always attractive and nice to look at, and it does not mean that religious feelings should be made fun of at any price, but that is of minor importance in the present context.”²¹ Finally, the text explains how *Jyllands-Posten* has called on illustrators to draw Muhammad as they see him.

Encircling the text are the 12 drawings, which can be roughly divided into three categories. The first category consists of five cartoons that are meta-comments on the task itself. One of the cartoons, for instance, shows a schoolboy named Mohammed who is pointing at a blackboard where it is written in Arabic: “The editors of *Jyllands-Posten* are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs.” The second category is illustrated by two drawings that depict the Prophet in a naturalistic or symbolic way. The third category contains five cartoons that more explicitly comment on Muslims and Islam itself. Since these last cartoons are the ones that my informants would refer to, I will describe three of them. The first cartoon depicts the Prophet with a bomb in his turban and the Islamic creed printed on the bomb itself. The second shows the Prophet holding a scimitar, flanked by two women in burqas, while the third shows five stylized female figures with facial features in the shape of a crescent moon and a star. This last cartoon is accompanied by a short poem: “Prophet! You crazy bloke! Keeping women under the yoke!”

The text of the *Jyllands-Posten* article is very much in line with the rhetoric of Mikkelsen in the sense that modern secular democracy is being put in opposition to Muslims and Islam. The cartoons are more differentiated and not all of them address Muslims; some of them are pointed at the newspaper itself. However, four of the cartoons associate the Prophet with violence and/or the repression of woman. Seen as a whole, the project has a lecturing tone: Muslims must learn that in a secular democracy, religious feelings are subordinated to freedom of speech.

The Case of Layal

Finally, I will briefly describe the case of Layal to illustrate how random citizens of Denmark invoke the discourse on Muslims. Layal came to Denmark from Lebanon when she was 7 years old. Although her family has a Muslim background, she did not have a religious upbringing, and her mother does not wear a headscarf. Nonetheless, inspired by an Arabic television show hosted by the Egyptian preacher Amr Khaled, Layal decided to put on a headscarf when she was 20 years old.²² Until then, she had been classified by those in her surroundings as ‘Danish’, due to her blue eyes, brown hair, and light skin color. Perceived as likable and promising, she never had any problems obtaining jobs. However, according to Layal, all that changed when she decided to wear a headscarf. At job interviews, the employees explicitly stated that the headscarf was a problem, either in relation to the customers or to her potential colleagues. She finally got a job at Amnesty International in one of their ‘face-to-face’ campaigns to recruit new members.

Together with two colleagues, she was sent to a Copenhagen suburb and, equipped with a portfolio, started her first day at work in a small town square. In her portfolio were three campaigns: one condemning torture, one condemning violence against women, and one advocating freedom of speech. However, when Layal approached people, they soon started discussing her instead of the campaigns. Shouting at her, a man asked how was she supposed to teach him anything about discrimination and suppression when she was obviously oppressed herself. The man was quite large, and Layal felt intimidated and unprepared for this kind of attack. Later, she approached an elderly woman, who told Layal that she would not have anything to do with a “scarf girl.” The woman continued: “You should return to your homeland and try to improve things down there before you start criticizing us.” Layal explained that she herself was Danish, but the woman dismissed her and her explanations. Layal told me that she did manage to sign up some people, but only by humiliating herself. Over and over, she had to explain that she was not oppressed, that her husband did not beat her up, and that Denmark was her homeland. Layal was exhausted. During the first week, one of her colleagues, who also wore a headscarf, was spat at, and their superior at Amnesty International emphasized that they should call the police if they were physically attacked. After one and a half weeks, Layal resigned. She says that she would recommend working for Amnesty International to anyone—but if a woman is wearing a headscarf, she has to be really strong.

Layal’s story is interesting because it turns things upside down. Most of the young Palestinians I know are used to being distinguished as Muslims due to their skin color. However, Layal happens to have a fair complexion and was unprepared for the reactions that she experienced when she decided to wear a headscarf. Of course, she was transforming herself by starting to take up Islamic practices, but the biggest change was how other people reacted to her. From being a polite and promising young woman, she had turned into an oppressed Muslim woman. Despite this, I believe that what really sparked off the harsh responses while Layal was working for Amnesty International was not the headscarf itself, nor the fact that she was Muslim, but rather the combination of being Muslim and advocating human rights. Layal was inadvertently combining two opposing categories—the ‘medieval, oppressed Muslim’ (represented by the scarf) and the ‘enlightened modern West’ (Amnesty International, human rights)—and I suggest that it was this crossover that resulted in the condemnatory reactions. Layal was not only combining these two opposing categories but also reversing and challenging the power relations between them.

The Discourse on Muslims as an Enlightenment Project

What is most striking in the above examples is that Danes and Muslims are constituted as antagonistic oppositions in a hierarchical relationship. If we scrutinize them, a scheme of dichotomies in the Danish discourse on immigrants

TABLE 1 Dichotomies in the Danish discourse on immigrants

Ethnic Danes	Immigrants
Western	Muslim
Secularism	Islam
Modern	Medieval
Democratic	Totalitarian
Freedom of speech	Censorship
Human rights	Religious dogmas
Gender equality	Oppression of women
Peaceful	Violent

emerges, as illustrated in table 1.²³ If, for a moment, we focus on the content of the scheme, it might be worth bearing in mind Edward Said's ([1978] 1995) central thesis in *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. According to Said, the 'Orient' in Orientalism does not reflect the actual Orient; rather, the constructed Orient reflects the West. In other words, analyzing the content of the discourse on Muslims does not grant us insight into who Muslims are but instead illustrates how the West, including Denmark, is constructing itself. I will therefore concentrate on the left-hand column in the above scheme, which describes how Danes perceive themselves. This column lists traits and values that are all associated with the intellectual movement of the European Enlightenment, dating from the late seventeenth century to the late eighteenth century. When I refer to an 'enlightenment project', it is because the left-hand column is not just about how Danes construct themselves. It also indicates what immigrants or Muslims should strive to become.

The enlightenment discourse on Muslims is, of course, not an exact replica of the original Enlightenment but rather a contemporary, selective resampling of the values associated with the Enlightenment. In the foreword to a history textbook for Danish high-school pupils, the author comments on the 2005 proclamation of the Ministry of Education on the subject of history. He writes that the episoding of history is a rather arbitrary piece of engineering that reflects the concerns of the present as much as the past. According to him, the ministry's designation of a historical period from 1453 to 1776 reflects a contemporary interest in the relationship between Islam and the West (Thiedecke 2005: 10).²⁴ According to the textbook, one of the central paradigms of the Enlightenment was that human beings are born with reason and are capable of independent thinking (Kant in Thiedecke 2005: 66–67). Immanuel Kant argued that, through enlightenment, the human being, and society as such, could liberate itself from both secular and religious authorities (ibid.). In this interpretation, the Enlightenment is presented as an attempt to make society progress and to counter both absolute monarchy and the religious thinking that predominated at the time.²⁵ Besides Kant, the textbook introduces extracts from the writings of the philosopher John Locke, who is often credited with the idea

of the separation of church and state. These two philosophers are also highlighted in the Canon on Democracy that the Danish government launched in 2007.²⁶ According to the textbook and the Canon on Democracy, the concepts of democracy, equality, freedom of speech, and human rights are an outcome of the Enlightenment.²⁷

An article in a recent issue of *Kritik*, a well-known Danish literary journal, is relevant here. Among the many contributions that pay tribute to the Enlightenment in this special issue is a brief critical essay by a Danish philosopher, Søren Klausen (2008), entitled “Hold Your Horses!” Commenting on the renewed interest in the Enlightenment in Danish public debate, he calls the current version “the smug Enlightenment” and accuses it of being out of touch with the original spirit of the Enlightenment in terms of self-criticism and nuances (ibid.: 30–31). According to Klausen, the contemporary discourse is characterized by the glorification of the present, a dogmatic liberalism, and the fetishism of rights and principles (ibid.: 31). The case of Layal illustrates this in the sense that the principles of human rights seemed more important to the passers-by than the particular human being whom they were addressing. Badiou (2001: 14) writes that the ethics engrained in human rights are based on an a priori determination of evil, as a result of which “ethics prevents itself from thinking the singularity of situations as such.” This is exactly what we find with regard to Layal, as well as the cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten*. In this sense, these cases demonstrate that values such as equality, human rights, and freedom of speech are not neutral concepts. Rather, they are part of a wider discourse on Muslims that is used to legitimize what Badiou describes as a “civilizing intervention” (ibid.: 13), examples of which include the canons on culture and democracy, the cartoons published by *Jyllands-Posten*, and the direct face-to-face enlightenment of Layal. Asad (2003) urges us to study secularism, not just as an intellectual argument, but also as a political system that distributes and rearranges forms of suffering, recognizing some while ignoring others. Likewise, the current enlightenment discourse on Muslims tends to highlight certain kinds of inequality (in relation to gender), while simultaneously downplaying—or even creating—others (in relation to ethnicity). In the same way, it accentuates certain rights (freedom of speech) and practices indifference toward others (freedom of religion).

In attributing the values of a dark historical period to Muslims, while at the same time situating Danes within modern times, an asymmetrical set of oppositions is being constructed. Not only are Muslims assigned to an earlier evolutionary stage, but their traditions (Islam) are at the same time countered as something particularistic in relation to the universal values of the enlightened West (cf. Asad 2003: 169). As a consequence, the pedestrians did not see Layal as a young woman advocating human rights. Instead, she came to embody specific values attributed to a pre-modern time. Whereas the guest worker was perceived through economic relations (a kind of exchange), and immigrants were perceived through their culture (a kind of luggage that they had brought along from their ‘homeland’), ‘medieval mindsets’ are located inside the brain of each individual Muslim. The discourse on culture was also

essentializing, but the approach of invoking mindsets, which are even more difficult to change, digs one level deeper into the person. As Mikkelsen framed it in his speech, “The battle of culture will be long and tough.”²⁸

Finally, I suggest that, in terms of discourse, there is no one-to-one correspondence between specific human beings and the enlightenment discourse on Muslims. Not only is this discourse invoked by both secular and Christian Danes across the political divisions within Danish society, it is also invoked by Muslims themselves. Among Palestinians, it is used to criticize and distance oneself from other immigrants. One example occurred at the demonstration described above, when Khadije, a young Palestinian girl, evaluated the form of the demonstration as medieval.

Studying How the World Comes into Being: Creating Muslims in a Danish Setting

In every event, the world is created anew. While events reveal and come into being through the structures of society, they simultaneously create the self-same structures. In this sense, every event is unique and has a creative potential (cf. Kapferer 2006: 136). By using situational analysis as developed by Gluckman, it becomes possible to study and analyze this creation.

The publication of the cartoons and the subsequent demonstration were part of a range of events that not only manifested a discourse on immigrants but also transformed it. The fact that the discursive formation ‘Muslim’ has come to designate a mindset of specific medieval values implies that Palestinians are perceived not only as Muslims but also as a certain kind of human being, regardless of how they actually live their lives. Although the participants in the demonstration went down on their knees to pray for peace, this was interpreted by others as a hostile act. When the participants shouted “Islam is peace,” it was heard as “Islam is angry.” And while Layal was advocating women’s rights for Amnesty International, she was perceived as a repressed woman who was unaware of her own rights.

Gerd Baumann (2004: 19) summarizes three different possible structures that are inherent in the creation of alterity. One is an Orientalist structure based on Said’s work from 1978, another is a segmentary structure based on Evans-Pritchard’s work from 1940, and the third is a structure of encompassment based on Dumont’s studies of caste and hierarchy from 1980. Inspired by Baumann’s distinctions, it is possible to trace a structural development over time in the creation of alterity in Denmark. According to Schwartz (1985, 1990), in the 1970s, guest workers were perceived and used as a cheap labor force and studied through the lens of Marxist theories on class. This approach to alterity can be identified as a structure of encompassment. As Baumann (2004: 25) puts it, “Encompassment means an act of selfing by appropriating ... selected kinds of othering.” Since it is the self that does the encompassment, it always involves a hierarchy (ibid.: 26). If Danish society in the 1970s thought of itself in terms of classes, the immigrants were incorporated at the bottom of this

hierarchy as workers, and then only as temporary (as guests). The discourse on culture in the 1980s and 1990s, on the other hand, followed a classic Orientalist structure, where the Other is a mirror of oneself (ibid.: 20). The Other is not just a negative reflection but is also used to mirror one's own flaws in the form of self-criticism, which is why minorities could be seen simultaneously as backward and traditional, as exotic and mystical.

What is striking about the current discourse on Muslims is that it appears as an amputated structure of Orientalism in the sense that the Other is defined only in negative terms. Whereas the culture of Muslims could be perceived as exotic or interesting, their mindsets do not have these positive connotations but are instead perceived as a threat. It was no coincidence that the Palestinians referred to the Canon of Culture as the 'Cannon' of Culture: this simply reflected the fact that the discourse on Muslims often borrows its terms from the language of warfare. Both the minister of culture and Layal herself, as well as four of the cartoons depicted in the article "The Face of Muhammad," used metaphors or symbols originating from the field of war.

Baumann (2004: 42) writes that the implosion of grammar is characterized by a return to the anti-grammar of 'we are good, so they are bad' and illustrates this structural breakdown by referring to genocide. I do not think that this is what is at stake here. I suggest that the amputated and warlike discourse reflects the fact that, in both structure and content, the discourse on Muslims in Denmark runs parallel to, and is sometimes conflated with, the discourse on terrorism. This was also obvious in the Danish debate following the printing of the cartoons. The critics asserted that *Jyllands-Posten* was discriminating against a 'religious minority',²⁹ while others argued that Muslims in Denmark were part of a global community that was threatening and attacking Western values.³⁰ In this sense, the discourse on Muslims differs from previous discourses on immigrants in Denmark. Emphasizing the Muslim background of immigrants also implies contesting whether they are a Danish minority or rather the local representatives of a global religious community that is defined as a threat to the Western world, including Denmark (cf. Asad 1997: 186).

Conclusion

The transformation of the discourse on immigrants in Denmark is part of a global shift in power relations. The attack on the Twin Towers in 2001 and the subsequent 'war on terror' have altered the perception of Muslim immigrants in particular.³¹ However, the cartoon crisis did not simply reconstruct certain structures between ethnic Danes and immigrants. It succeeded in accomplishing something that until then had been impossible to achieve—uniting Muslims in Denmark, regardless of ethnic affiliations, different congregations, and differences due to class, generation, and so on.³² By offending the main symbol of Islam, *Jyllands-Posten* engendered a discursive space within which Muslims could join together. Whereas the Danish prime minister refused to meet with representatives of other nations (i.e., Middle Eastern ambassadors and the

Palestinian representative) to discuss the controversy,³³ the Danish Muslim congregations were handed a political platform from which they could protest through demonstrations, a lawsuit against *Jyllands-Posten*, and global advocacy among Muslim leaders and institutions.

In this sense, the demonstration communicated two messages. First, it addressed the Danish nation by challenging its discourse on Muslims. In its form as well as in its content, the demonstration opposed this perception as medieval and violent, sending the message that Muslims are civilized and peaceful. It did so by choosing a democratically recognized form of protest, by obeying Danish traffic regulations, by communicating in Danish and through written and verbal statements, such as “Islam is peace,” “No to racism and fanaticism, yes to peace and co-existence,” and “Yes to dialogue, no to clash of civilizations,” challenging the thesis of Samuel P. Huntington (1996).³⁴ Second, the demonstration challenged a Muslim and Middle Eastern audience simultaneously to see who would stand up for Muslims in a time of crisis. The outcome revealed the powerlessness of local national Arab leaders, but simultaneously united Muslims in Denmark and worldwide (if only for a moment).

This also explains why the 12 cartoons attracted widespread attention. The cartoon controversy became globally known because of its worldwide local potentials—that is, not because it insulted a pre-existing global Muslim community, but because it created a discursive space that any Muslim group could enter and use to counter local Arab regimes and Western hegemonies. For instance, in Palestine, Hamas won the parliamentary elections on 25 January 2006. In the following week, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades (associated with the nationalist party Fatah), Islamic Jihad, and Hamas all organized demonstrations against the cartoons. These protests did not just address *Jyllands-Posten* or Denmark but also promoted the organizations themselves in the ongoing power struggle between nationalist and Islamic movements in Palestine. Thus, while the cartoons created a political platform on which Muslims could unite and form a dominant opposition, it is only through an exploration of the local political contexts that one can understand the timing and content of the continuous protests and attacks on Danish embassies worldwide.

Gluckman offers us a method whereby we are able to analyze the creation of the structures of the wider society by studying the micro-politics of specific events. It is exactly this methodological grasp linking events with structures that still makes situational analysis an apt method for studying the world in the twenty-first century. It has become fashionable to highlight the global state of the world. New technologies such as the Internet and cell phones are said to have created new time-space compressions that make local fieldwork redundant. Different attempts have been made to rethink fieldwork, for instance, by following the social biography of things (Kopytoff 1986) or by conducting multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995). However, I think we should be careful not to conflate the empirical and analytical levels of our observations. Multiplying periods of fieldwork locally or following people or things across nation-states does not necessarily give us a better or even a different insight into how the world is constituted. If anthropology is the study of human beings, then it

does not matter, on an empirical level, whether the context is designated as global, national, or local.³⁵ What does matter is how on the analytical level we make sense of the world—how we are able to move beyond or at least link the actions and feelings of positioned individuals with wider social and political structures. Situational analysis provides a starting point for this.

Gluckman ([1940] 1958: 26–27) has been criticized for his concept of ‘equilibrium’, his emphasis on social continuity in the face of change (see van Teeffelen 1977 for a critique). However, in the present case I think Gluckman’s conservative outlook is worth considering before we jump to conclusions. We should not be seduced by the global scale of the cartoon controversy into believing that it sparked a process of disruption or disorganization. A shift might have occurred on one level, but on another level nothing has really changed. To borrow a French saying, “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” (cf. Sahlin in Kapferer 2006: 127). The cartoon controversy might have re-created the discourse on Muslims, and it might have generated a political platform that Muslims all over the world could use to promote their own agendas. However, it did not change the structural relationship between the Danish majority and minorities. Although the Palestinians, along with other immigrant groups in Denmark, were reconceptualized as Muslims, they continue to represent the Other.

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Notes

1. This chapter is based on one year of fieldwork among Palestinians from Lebanon who are residing in Denmark. Palestinians constitute one of the largest refugee groups in the country, and they played a prominent role in the protests against the cartoons of the Prophet.
2. For the purpose of this chapter, I will use Foucault’s concept of ‘discursive formation’. ‘Discursive formation’ designates the relationship between statements (Foucault 1972: 31). It is “the regularity of the irregular distribution of statements” (Andersen 2003: vi; see Foucault 1972: 141–148). Statements are practices that systematically form the object of which they speak, as well as the subject it enables to speak (Foucault 1972: 40–56), that is, a “statement creates discursive spaces from which something can be stated” (Andersen 2003: 11). I combine a situational analysis of the demonstration with a discursive analysis in order to show how the discourse on immigrants is manifested and transformed in the event, creating a religious opposition.

3. From December 2005 to February 2006, numerous demonstrations and other protests against the cartoons took place worldwide. More than 100 people were killed during these protests, while the cartoonists themselves received several death threats. In addition, a consumer boycott of Danish products was initiated, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) forwarded a letter of protest to the Danish prime minister and to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Since then, the cartoons have been reactualized over and over again. In recent developments, the Parisian weekly *Charlie Hebdo* was attacked on 7 January 2015, and 11 people were killed. The newspaper is known for its satirical drawings of the Prophet and had published a reprint of the Danish cartoons. On 14 February 2015, a young Danish Palestinian man opened fire at a cultural center in Copenhagen where Swedish artist Lars Vilks, who also is known for his cartoons of the Prophet, was speaking. One man was killed. The same night, the gunman killed a Jewish security guard in front of Copenhagen's main synagogue, after which he himself was shot and killed by police. For overviews of the development of the cartoon controversy, see Hansen and Hundevadt (2006), Jerichow and Rode (2006), Lindekilde et al. (2009), and Kublitz (2011).
4. The Canon of Culture is a selection of the most important Danish artifacts within seven different fields of art, for example, literature, music, and so on. This is explained in more detail in the pages that follow.
5. "Tale: Kulturkampen bliver lang og sej," *Information*, 27 September 2005. Throughout the chapter, I refer to different Danish media. *Jyllands-Posten*, *Information*, and *Politiken* are Danish daily newspapers. Ritzau is a Danish news agency. Along the political spectrum, *Jyllands-Posten* is considered right-wing, *Politiken* is closer to the Labour Party (Socialdemokratiet) and *Information* is associated with the leftist parties in Danish policy (cf. Hervik and Berg 2007: 25).
6. Established in 1995, the Danish People's Party was and is primarily known for agitating for a strict policy against immigrants and refugees. As a result of the 2001 election, it became the third largest party in Denmark.
7. "Sæt muslimer i russiske fængsler," Ritzau, 29 September 2005.
8. "Muhammeds ansigt," *Jyllands-Posten*, 30 September 2005.
9. The label *kulturradikale* refers to left-wing artists and intellectuals who dominated the cultural scene in Denmark in the 1960s.
10. See Olwig and Pærregaard (2007a) for a discussion of the concept of 'integration'.
11. For ethnographic cases involving this reconceptualization, see Johansen (2007) and Pedersen (2007).
12. This overview is admittedly rather schematic. The actual development has been much more fluid and gradual, and today, within different spheres of Danish society, all three discourses can be identified. However, I will argue that during my fieldwork the discourse on Muslims dominated.
13. I do not intend to assert that this discourse is specifically 'Danish' in any way, for I suspect that the development of the representation of immigrants in Denmark is quite similar to that in other European countries. See, for instance, Baumann (1996) for an analysis of the discourse on immigrants in London.
14. After eight years of Social Democratic rule, a right-wing government came to power in November 2001. The government was based on a coalition between Venstre (the Liberal Party of Denmark) and the Conservative Party and was supported by the Danish People's Party.
15. "Statsminister Anders Fogh Rasmussens Nytårstale 2002," Statsministeriet, http://www.stm.dk/_p_7354.html (accessed 11 November 2010).
16. "Hvad vil det sige at være dansk?" Ritzau, 8 December 2004.
17. "Kulturminister Brian Mikkelsens tale," *Konservative Landsråd*, 25 September 2005, <http://lr05.konservative.dk/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=70> (accessed 11 November 2010). The sites referred to designate the farthest corners of the country of Denmark.

18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. "Muhammeds ansigt," *Jyllands-Posten*, 30 September 2005.
21. Ibid.
22. Gluckman (1963: 143) writes that the emergence of religious movements and the return to old rituals in South Africa can be seen as responses to modernity instead of cultural leftovers. Likewise, Layal's decision to wear a headscarf should be perceived as a modern token rather than as a retreat to an ancient Palestinian custom.
23. In a study of how the Danish media covered religion in 2001, a rather similar scheme is presented that opposes the Danish understanding of Christianity to Islam. The author adds that whereas Christianity is perceived as rational and associated with reason, Islam is perceived as irrational and characterized by obedience (Hervik 2002: 211).
24. With regard to the significance of this time frame, in 1453 the Muslim Ottomans conquered Constantinople, while in 1776 the United States Declaration of Independence was signed and Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, which contributed to the development of classical liberalism, was published. The year 1776 is used by the Ministry of Education to demarcate the end of the Enlightenment, although the author of the textbook chooses to include France's 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (Thiedecke 2005: 10–11).
25. See Badiou (2001: 8) for a critique of the "immense 'return to Kant.'"
26. "Demokratikanon," Undervisnings Ministeriet, 31 May 2007, <http://pub.uvm.dk/2008/demokratikanon/hel.html> (accessed 11 November 2010).
27. Ralf Pittelkow (2002), a current political commentator at *Jyllands-Posten*, has written a book entitled *After September 11th: The West and Islam*. In it, he maintains that the difference between the West and the 'Islamic world' is that the former was transformed during the Enlightenment, whereas the latter never went through this transformation (ibid.: 9).
28. The discourse on Muslims also comprises legislation addressing Muslims and other immigrants, such as legislation on family reunion (Rytter 2007). In the spring of 2009, the Danish Parliament passed a law forbidding the use of political and religious symbols, including headscarves, in the Danish courts. This ban affects only judges. See <http://www.womendialogue.org/magazine/headscarves-danish-workplaces>.
29. See the letter from 22 former Danish ambassadors in "Danske ambassadører leverer skarp kritik af Fogh," *Politiken*, 19 December 2005, <http://politiken.dk/indland/ECE132427/danske-ambassadoerer-leverer-skarp-kritik-af-fogh/>.
30. See the newsletter of the Danish People's Party, dated 6 January 2006, at <http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk>.
31. Denmark has taken an active part in the 'war on terror', both militarily, by being engaged in the war in Afghanistan (since 2002) and the war in Iraq (since 2003), and legally, by passing a law on terror in 2002, which has resulted in several trials on terror.
32. In September 2005, the most widely read article on the Web page of one of the biggest Danish Muslim congregations was entitled "The Divisions and (Lack of) Choices of the Muslims." The article addressed the lack of unity and cooperation among Muslims and Muslim institutions in Denmark. See "Muslimernes splittelse og (fra)valg," *Det Islamiske Troessamfund i Danmark*, 20 March 2005, <http://wakf.com/wakfweb/news.nsf/ByUID/ABB83C29463CDAD0C1256FCA0008356A?OpenDocument> (accessed 11 November 2010).
33. In October 2005, 10 ambassadors from Middle Eastern countries and the Palestinian representative addressed a letter to Prime Minister Rasmussens, asking for a meeting concerning the cartoons. The prime minister turned down the request (Jerichow and Rode 2006: 24–25, 28).
34. Huntington (1996) proposed that, in the post-Cold War world, the cultural and religious identities of people would be the principal source of conflict.
35. The world was also 'global' at the time of Gluckman's fieldwork ([1940] 1958: 62): "Since Zululand is a territorial section of the world system, its developments are determined by structural relations in the whole system."

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